

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8513

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T AMMAN 3683

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR MASS JO SA US

SUBJECT: JORDAN AIR DEFENSE

REF: (A) JIDDA 4863 (B) STATE 173897, (C) AMMAN 3680

1. KING WAS IN TOUCH WITH ME BY TELEPHONE EARLY EVENING

JULY 13 FOLLOWING CONVERSATION REPORTED REFTEL C.

2. HE TOLD ME HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT TWO THINGS (A)

THEIR AMBASSADOR TO SAUDI ARABIA HAD REPORTED TO HIM THAT

THE SAUDIS WERE SAYING THEY HAD ALREADY BEEN IN TOUCH

WITH THE US AMBASSADOR ABOUT THE AIR DEFENSE QUESTION

AND (B) HE WAS CONCERNED THAT WE NOT HANDLE THE SAUDIS

IN A WAY THAT LIMITED OR DETRACTED FROM SAUDI COMMITMENT

TO THE SHAH AND INDIRECTLY TO HIM(HUSSEIN) FOR \$500

MILLION PAID AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

3. ON THE FIRST POINT, I TOLD HUSSEIN THAT I WAS NOT

INFORMED ABOUT ANY SUCH MEETING AND THAT I HAD ONLY RE

CEIVED SOME INDICATIONS THAT THE SAUDIS HAD INDIRECTLY

INDICATED THEY WANTED TO BE IN TOCH WUTH THE US

EMBASSY IN JIDDA AND THAT THEY WERE SOMEWHAT OPTIMISTIC

ABOUT THE FUNDING THE PROGRAM. (I HAD NOT AT THAT TIME

RECEIVED REFTELS A AND B WHICH WERE WAITING ME AT

THE EMBASSY THIS MORNING JULY 14)

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4. THE KINGS SECOND POINT TURNED AROUND THE STRONG

PITCH HE HAD MADE TO THE SAUDIS FOR AS LARGE A PAYMENT AS POSSIBLE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I TOLD THE KING THAT FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, THE SAUDI COMMITMENT WAS IMPORTANT AND THAT THE PAYMENTS FOR THE SYSTEM WOULD NORMALLY BE SPREAD OUT OVER FOUR YEARS WITH HEAVIER PAYMENTS DUE EARLIER ON DURING THE PROGRAM.

5. THE KING SAID THAT WAS EXACTLY THE POINT HE WANTED TO MAKE. HE HOPED THE SAUDIS WOULD NOT WANT TO STRETCH THINGS OUT SO FAR AS TO MAKE THE DEAL UNWORKABLE OR TO DELAY DELIVERIES TO HIM. IN FACT IF SAUDIS WERE PREPARED TO COMMIT A LITTLE MORE EARLIER ON AS HE HAD SUGGESTED TO THEM HE COULD POSSIBLY, IN LIGHT OF ANTICIPATED SAVINGS USE THE FUNDS TO EXPAND THE PACKAGE IN JORDAN'S INTEREST.

6. MY ONLY REPLY TO THE KING ON THE LATTER POINT WAS TO STRESS AGAIN THAT PAYMENT SCHEDULES INVOLVED SOME FLEXIBILITY AND THAT I WAS SURE THE US WOULD HANDLE THE CASE IN A WAY WHICH WOULD NOT RESULT IN JORDAN'S LOSING FUNDS WHICH IT MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE RECEIVED FROM THE SAUDIS.

7. AT A MINIMUM, IN LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE PROCEEDED WITH JORDANAINS AS INDICATED BY CROWN PRINCE FAHD TO AMBASSADOR PORTER, I BELIEVE I SHOULD BE AUTHORIZED (SEE REFTEL B) TO TELL HUSSEIN THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE APPROACHED US AND THAT WE ARE DISCUSSING WITH THEM DETAILS OF THE PACKAGE. KING WAS SOMEWHAT AGITATED LAST NIGHT THAT THE WHOLE SHOW WAS DRIFTING OFF AGAIN TO THE POINT WHERE CHANCES WOULD BE GREATER FOR FOUL UP THAN CLEAR SAILING. BE DOING THIS I CAN HELP TO CALM HIM DOWN AND AVOID HAVING HIM RUSH OFF AGAIN TO SAUDI ARABIA OR EVEN WORSE SEND SOME SPECIAL EMISSARY WHOSE ACCEPTANCE BY THE SAUDIS AND WHOSE CAPABILITIES TO HANDLE THE SITUATION WELL ARE DECIDEDLY LESS THAN THOSE OF THE KING.

8. PLEASE ADVISE.

PICKERING

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